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ANIMAL ISSUES TASK FORCE

Monday, June 25, 2012

6:00 p.m.

4th Floor Conference Room – Busch Municipal Building

MEMBERS Mary Collette, Chairwoman; Carl Woodland, Janet Martin, Gwen Evans, Alicia Mathis,
PRESENT: Carrie Galvan, Christian Mechlin, Dr. Michael Stafford, and Kathleen Cowens.

MEMBERS

ABSENT: Randall Voss, Dr. Rita Wittu, and Cindy Larson.

STAFF Clay Goddard, Mike Brothers, and Karen Prescott, Health Department; Anita Baker
PRESENT: Climer, City Clerk's Office.

GUESTS: Jim Swain, Citizen.

Chairwoman Mary Collette called the meeting to order at approximately 6:01 p.m., and welcomed everyone.

The Task Force briefly reviewed the meeting minutes of May 21, 2012.

Gwen Evans moved to approve the May 21, 2012 minutes.

Alicia Mathis seconded the motion, and it was approved.

Clay Goddard, Assistant Director-Springfield/Greene County Health Department, and Karen Prescott, Environmental Health Administrator-Health Department, briefly gave an overview regarding the following handouts: Animal Control Data for Fiscal Year 10-11; and Pet Licensing of Benchmark Cities (2 handouts). *(Please refer to Exhibits A, B, & C located within the City Clerk's Office for additional information.)*

The Task Force, Mr. Goddard, and Ms. Prescott briefly discussed the information.

Ms. Prescott informed the Task Force that the City's Animal Shelter has a maximum number of animals they can accommodate, and continues to work with the various adoption agencies, such as C.A.R.E, regarding animal adoptions. She briefly explained the issue of cats/kittens has increased within the City due to it being "kitten season" at this time. Ms. Prescott added that the City's Animal Shelter has received/picked-up several sick kittens.

In response to a question posed by Ms. Evans, Ms. Prescott reported that the City's Animal Shelter currently is housing approximately 28 cats. Dr. Michael Stafford noted that the Animal Shelter is required to have so many square feet available per animal, and the maximum that can be housed at the Animal Shelter in relations to cats is approximately 30.

Mr. Goddard informed the Task Force that due to the limited amount of space at the City's Animal Shelter, the Health Department may begin requiring appointments for dog owners who want to bring their dog/dogs to the Animal Shelter depending on space availability in the future.

Dr. Stafford briefly clarified that regarding Exhibit A the City also uses xylazine with the ketamine to help fully anesthetize the animals during euthanizing.

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Ms. Prescott gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled “A Closer Look at Cities in Missouri.” *(Please refer to Exhibit D located within the City Clerk’s Office for additional information.)*

The following is an outline of the presentation:

- A. Republic, MO
- B. Republic Intake and Disposition
- C. Columbia – Boone County
- D. Columbia - Boone County’s Contract with Humane Society
- E. Columbia – Boone County Intake and Disposition
- F. Columbia – Boone County Pet Licensing
- G. St. Louis County (2 slides)
- H. St. Louis County Pet Licensing
- I. St. Joseph
- J. Questions?

Ms. Prescott informed the Task Force that St. Joseph is apparently having computer software problems, so they were unable to provide the Health Department with data information at this time. She noted that the City should have some information from St. Joseph for the next Task Force meeting.

Ms. Prescott noted that the City of Republic, Missouri does not have a pet licensing program at this time.

Carrie Galvan briefly addressed that Republic use to require a pet license; however, it was discontinued in approximately 2006. She noted that Republic does not provide shots/vaccinations for their animals, which the City does.

During the presentation, Ms. Prescott briefly responded to questions posed by the Task Force.

In response to a question posed by Chairwoman Collette, Ms. Prescott noted that this year’s fiscal budget for the Health Department in relations to the issue of animal control is approximately \$617,000, and the Health Department employees approximately 8 animal control officers at this time. She added that the Health Department would be losing 2 animal control officers within the next two months, which will bring the number to 6.

In response to a question posed by Carl Woodland, Ms. Prescott reported that Columbia-Boone County does not have an animal control shelter/facility at this time. She noted that Columbia-Boone County contracts with the Central Missouri Humane Society regarding their animals. Ms. Prescott reported that Columbia-Boone County has approximately 6 animal control officers at this time. Dr. Stafford noted that other than Columbia most of Boone County is rural, some of which is covered in a significant amount of water due to the river.

In response to a question posed by Ms. Galvan, Ms. Prescott briefly discussed that St. Louis County has a newer shelter/facility, which has only been in operation since November 2011.

Kathleen Cowens arrived at approximately 6:20 p.m.

The Task Force, Mr. Goddard, and Ms. Prescott discuss the issue of pet licensing, as well as continued to review the various exhibits.

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Mr. Goddard noted that due to the economic conditions, the Health Department has seen an increase in animals from pet owners who can no longer afford to maintain and/or keep their pet due to the costs, especially if a pet has to take prescription medication.

Ms. Evans briefly expressed that she feels a possible pet license within the City should not apply to cats. She also reported that she also feels every citizen should be “paying for the pound” whether or not he/she has a pet, and maybe a tax should be considered versus a possible pet license.

Ms. Galvan expressed that she feels a possible pet license would increase “pet dumping” by individuals who do not want to pay a license fee, which would possibly create more issues with stray animals within the City and Greene County. She reported that she also feels some exemptions should be considered if a possible pet license is considered, such as exemptions for lower income individuals/families and senior citizens who are on fixed incomes, but are taking care of their pets, such as keeping their vaccinations updated.

Following further discussion, Dr. Stafford requested that information be provided regarding the estimated compliance rate of other cities that have a pet license, as well as a possible cost estimate in relations to administering their programs. Mr. Goddard affirmed.

Mr. Goddard informed the Task Force that a possible license for pet would probably not be a positive cash flow, but a negative one for the Health Department in relations to animal control. He briefly addressed that he feels spaying and neutering should be encouraged, so there are less animals within the City’s Animal Shelter and the Community.

The topic of micro chipping was briefly discussed, which may help reunite pets with their owners if they are lost as opposed to the animals being taken directly to the City’s Shelter facility.

Chairwoman Collette requested that information also be provided to the Task Force regarding if the other cities are using veterinarians (a third party) to help implement their pet licensing programs.

Mr. Goddard briefly discussed the City’s code regulations regarding the limitation on the number of cats kept as pets (Section 18-5 of the Springfield City Code), which is no person shall at any time keep, harbor or own as pets more than four cats over the age of six months. He noted that City staff would compile some information for the Task Force in relations to the City’s code regulations regarding the issue of animals.

Ms. Cowens briefly expressed that she feels the issue of feral/stray cats needs to be addressed within the City.

Mr. Goddard informed the Task Force that City staff would compile some additional information for their review, as well as re-review the data in relations to the issue of licensing fees for St. Louis County in the near future.

The Task Force continued to discuss the issue of pet licensing, particularly the approximate 4 cities (Evansville, IN; Fort Wayne, IN.; Huntsville, AL.; and Salt Lake City, UT) that have lifetime license fees for canines (dogs) and felines (cats).

Dr. Stafford briefly addressed that he feels a goal should be considered regarding what will be accomplished in relations to a possible pet license/fee, such as trying to decrease the animal population within the Community and/or increase the responsibility of animal owners. He added that he feels if the goal is trying to decrease the animal population, he feels a possible pet license/fee would probably not work.

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Chairwoman Collette briefly referred to and discussed last month's meeting minutes regarding Calgary, Ontario, Canada being a "gold standard" for local animal control programs, which apparently focuses on responsible pet ownership, and is enforced by law based on the following four principles: the licensing and identification of pets; spay/neuter services are provided at no cost to low-income individuals who cannot pay for the procedures themselves; training, medical care, socialization and physical care are provided to all animals that need it; and do not allow pets to become a threat to the community.

During tonight's meeting, the Task Force and City staff conducted a "brainstorming session" regarding the following issues: Animal Control facility; Facility location?; Licensure – Intent is to foster responsible pet ownership and provision of better service to pet owners; and Policies. *(Please refer to Exhibit E located within the City Clerk's Office for additional information.)*

In response to a question posed by Ms. Galvan, Mr. Goddard briefly discussed that the City has several owned/surplus properties, one of which may be a possible location for a new City Animal Shelter facility in the future. He reported that City staff would provide additional information regarding the City owned properties/surplus properties for the next upcoming meeting. Mr. Goddard noted that a buffer space would be needed regarding any possible re-location for the City's Animal Shelter facility. Chairwoman Collette added that she feels a possible location should be central located. Ms. Prescott expressed that she feels a possible location should be possibly in conjunction with a Springfield/Greene County Parks facility, such as possibly near the Rutledge Wilson Farm Park.

In response to another question posed by Ms. Galvan, Mr. Goddard briefly explained that the Health Department has to have an animal shelter/facility available for quarantining animals. Dr. Stafford noted that he feels the City's current Animal Shelter facility, which is located in a floodplain area, is inadequate to serve the Community in relations to the animals at this time. Mr. Goddard and Dr. Stafford reported that there are no "exercise runs" available for dogs at the current Animal Shelter facility.

Dr. Stafford suggested the possibility of having a joint City/County animal control facility/shelter, which could be used to house animals from outlying municipalities, such as Walnut Grove and Strafford, who are in need of an animal control facility/shelter. He added that possibly extending the opportunity of housing animals from other municipalities/counties located near Greene, such as Polk, Christian, and Webster, would help increase the funding potential for a new animal control facility/shelter.

In response to another question posed by Ms. Galvan, Mr. Goddard reported that the Health Department use to help cover the urban service area of Greene County with services, such as animal control; however, due to budget issues Greene County decided to discontinue their contract for the urban service area with the Health Department. Ms. Prescott briefly discussed that if the a new animal shelter/facility was constructed, individual kennels could be provided to help quarantine sick animals, while keeping those away from the other animals that are adoptable.

Mr. Goddard briefly explained that several municipalities, who do not have direct access to an animal shelter/facility, are having a difficult time in dealing with the issue of animals, and many may favor an alternative for housing their animals with another entity. He reported that the issue of enforcement could be left up to the other municipalities.

In response to another question posed by Mr. Woodland, Mr. Goddard reported that the City of Willard is the only local municipality that has a current contract with the Health Department in relations to animal control at this time; however, Willard does conduct their own enforcement.

Mr. Goddard noted that any potential location for a new animal shelter/facility would need access to City utilities, such as water and natural gas.

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Ms. Galvan briefly commented that she had felt the City should join forces with the local Southwest Missouri Humane Society in relations to the issue of animals; however, she expressed that she no longer feels this way and is open to other possible options at this time.

Several of the Task Force members expressed their support of constructing a new City animal shelter/facility, which should be “centrally located,” in the future.

In response to a question posed by Janet Martin, Ms. Prescott reported that the City owned property near West By Pass and James River Freeway (near the Southwest Water Treatment Plant) would need utilities constructed (i.e. water, sewer, and natural gas), which would be expensive to be build.

Mr. Goddard noted that he feels that some municipalities, such as Republic, would have interest in contracting with the Health Department in relations to an animal shelter/facility.

Chairwoman Collette expressed interest in knowing what local municipalities would be interested in contracting with the Health Department if a possible new animal shelter/facility was constructed.

Mr. Goddard reported that the Health Department staff would try to compile some information for the Task Force, such as what the cost is for some local municipalities regarding their intake expenses relating to animals at this time.

Dr. Stafford reported that he knows the issue of animals is a major concern/problem for some smaller local municipalities, such as Fair Grove and Walnut Grove, at this time.

The Task Force continued to “brainstorm” and discuss their ideas with Mr. Goddard.

Ms. Martin briefly addressed that apparently some communities, such as Kansas City, is utilizing an approach of animal tags/microchips, so if a running-at-large animal, like a dog, is picked up/caught by an animal control officer, a device is used to scan the tag/chip, so the officer knows where to take the animal, so it does not go to an animal shelter/facility for intake.

Ms. Marin also explained that there is information available pertaining to the issue of Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), and the issue of “feral freedom” in Florida.

Ms. Cowens noted that there is differing information between the issues of Trap-Neuter-Return versus Trap-Neuter-Restrain. She added that she feels Trap-Neuter-Restrain may be a possibility to review.

Following further discussion, Mr. Goddard reiterated that City staff would provide the Task Force with additional information, such as a copy of the City’s code regulations pertaining to animals, and City owned/surplus property locations for a potential site, in the near future.

Ms. Galvan briefly referred to and discussed a handout entitled Dog Bite Investigation seminar. *(Please refer to Exhibit F located within the City Clerk’s Office for additional information.)* She encouraged the Task Force members to attend a session if available; however, space is limited. Ms. Galvan noted that the local United States Postal Service (U.S.P.S) has been invited to the upcoming seminar.

The Task Force and Mr. Goddard also briefly discussed a copy of a letter from the U.S.P.S. in relations to vicious animal attacks, which was e-mailed to them on May 15, 2012. *(Please refer to Exhibit G located within the City Clerk’s Office for additional information.)* Apparently, no formal/official response from the City has been made at this time.

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Following the discussion and per a consensus of the Task Force, Mr. Goddard reported that he would talk with the Greg Burris, City Manager, about Mayor Stephens possibly sending a formal/official response to the U.S.P. S. versus a response coming directly from the Task Force.

Chairwoman Collette noted that she would like the Task Force mentioned within the response, but not be the focus.

Mike Brothers, Public Information Office-Health Department, reported that he would help contribute regarding a possible response from the City. He also noted that the Task Force's blog and webpage is available, which includes meeting information, such as the meeting agendas and minutes, at this time.

A schedule list of the Task Force meetings was provided during tonight's meeting. *(Please refer to Exhibit G located within the City Clerk's Office for additional information.)* The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for July 30, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the 4th Floor Conference Room-Busch Municipal Building.

Alicia Mathis informed the Task Force that she would be unable to attend the next meeting, which will be held on Monday, July 30, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the 4th Floor Conference Room-Busch Municipal Building.

With no further business, the Task Force meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:35 p.m.